

T W O
S E R M O N S,

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH

O F

CHISLEHURST IN KENT.

2817

1607

TWO

S E R M O N S



PARISH CHURCH

OF

CHRISTCHURCH IN KENT

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T W O
S E R M O N S,

PREACHED IN THE
PARISH CHURCH

O F

CHISLEHURST IN KENT.

THE FIRST ON FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 1793, BEING
THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A GENERAL FAST,

THE SECOND ON SUNDAY, JUNE 2, UPON READ-
ING HIS MAJESTY'S LETTER IN BEHALF OF A
COLLECTION FOR THE FRENCH CLERGY.

By FRANCIS WOLLASTON,

RECTOR OF THAT PARISH. *K*

L O N D O N:

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M DCC XCIII.

TWO
SERMONS

PREACHED IN THE

HARTSHORCH



CHRISTIANUS IN SENT

THE FIRST OF WHICH WAS PREACHED ON THE FIRST

OF MAY 1781 AT THE CHURCH OF HARTSHORCH

BY THE REV. JAMES HARTSHORCH

AND THE SECOND ON THE SECOND OF MAY 1781

AT THE CHURCH OF HARTSHORCH

BY THE REV. JAMES HARTSHORCH

AND THE SECOND ON THE SECOND OF MAY 1781

AT THE CHURCH OF HARTSHORCH

BY THE REV. JAMES HARTSHORCH

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

THE following Sermons, it has been imagined, might be of some service beyond the bounds of a small Parish to which they were addressed. If the Author has deceived himself therein, it is but what has happened to many before him.

ADVERTISEMENT

THE following sermons it has been imagined, might be of some service beyond the bounds of a small parish to which they were addressed. If the Author has benefited himself therein, it is but what has happened to many before him.

S E R M O N I.

2 PETER III. 17.

"BELOVED, SEEING YOU KNOW THESE THINGS

"ALREADY, BEWARE, LEST YE ALSO, BEING

"LED AWAY WITH THE ERROR OF THE

"WICKED, FALL FROM YOUR OWN STED-

"FASTNESS."

THE things of which the Apostle here speaks, are, the *certain assurance of Christ's coming to judgement*, together with the *dissolution of this world we now inhabit*. An awful subject! and highly deserving of serious meditation!

The Apostle, when he wrote this, was advanced in years; and knew, from the mouth of our Lord himself, that he was shortly to suffer martyrdom for the testimony which he bore to Christ. This Epistle therefore may be considered as a farewell to those who had embraced Christianity;

to exhort them to continue stedfast in the *practice* as well as the *profession* of it: warning them of false teachers who would arise in the bosom of the Church of Christ, and introduce erroneous doctrines into it; as also, that “in the last days”* there would be “scoffers, walking after their “own lusts;” who would blaspheme and deride Christianity, and set it at nought. But he assures them, that the word of God is true, and will be verified in its time; and the threats and the promises of the Gospel will punctually be fulfilled. Whereupon he concludes with exhorting them, in the words of my text, “Ye therefore beloved, “seeing ye know these things already, beware, “lest ye also, being led away with the error of the “wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.”

The same which the Apostle here says to them, it should seem may without any forced construction be said by your Pastor, on the solemn occasion of this Day, to you. Though far inferior to the Apostle in gifts, or knowledge of what may be the designs of the Almighty; yet, as a veteran in your service, who feels daily the weakness of declining years, and that he must not expect to be able often to address you more from hence; he thinks he cannot in any way better employ the

This I think therefore may be considered as a
known to these Christians.

present opportunity, than by taking the frame of this Epistle for his model, and speaking freely to you: recalling to your minds the principal points of that, which, during above twenty years close attention to you and watching over you, he has endeavoured to inculcate; warning you of what is to come upon the world in due time; and cautioning you, “left, being led astray” by the error of the wicked, you should fall from your steadfastness in the belief of the Gospel promises; and fail of that blessed hope, to which while strength has lasted he has endeavored to conduct you. What is now coming upon the world, no man can tell. That the times are perillous, beyond what imagination could have conceived possible, we all know. Let us try, whether we may not be awakened thereby to a proper consideration of our true interests.

The General Instruction you have received, during the time I have had the happiness of being set over you, has been, the grounding you well in the Fundamental *Truths* of Christianity, and the *Practice* resulting from them. I mean, the being of a God; his creation of the whole world; and his providential care of it, and of every individual in it: the Revelations he has made of himself and of his will to mankind; to Adam, to the Patriarchs, to the Israelites or Jews by Moses,

and last of all by Jesus Christ his Son; whom he sent in the nature and form of mortal man, to redeem mankind from sin and from death; to proclaim pardon to us all, on repentance and amendment of life; to assure us, through faith in him, of a resurrection to eternal life; and to eternal happiness in that life, provided we exert our endeavors to live in obedience to his commands during our continuance here; and with a promise, that we shall receive the assistance of God's holy Spirit, if we seek and ask it, to help our infirmities, and enable us to do what He expects us to strive to perform. These things, you all know, have been again and again inculcated; as the great guide to our behaviour, the foundation of all our hope. And though practical Duties have been often the subject of our Discourses in this place, as the end to which all knowledge ought to lead; however consonant they be with pure morality, you know they have always been enforced upon you on Gospel principles, as declared by the revealed will of God.

Morality alone, however agreeable to man's reason, and the feelings of right and wrong impressed on the human heart, cannot inspire such assured confidence as what we have received from the Declarations of the Almighty. It is from Him, and him alone, we can know with

any certainty that there will be another life after this. However the reasoning of man might have led him to such a hope; that hope was faint indeed before the coming of Jesus Christ. However true it be, that the Jews might have deduced it from some passages of those holy writings which were in their hands; even their knowledge of it was mixed with uncertainty, till it was declared to man, as it was purchased for man, by Jesus Christ. From him and his Apostles we have learnt, whence sin came into the world, and wherefore death; how pardon was obtained for us; and that another life is intended for us, wherein each person will be recompensed according to his deserving here. An object this, to which to look forward with earnestness; a Goal to which to contend with all our might.

This therefore it has been the drift of all the instruction you have had from me, to lay fairly and fully before you; and to impress well these eternal truths, not only on your minds, but your hearts too: and you well know that no exertions have been spared to enforce them: that, "having
 " escaped the corruption that is in the world, you
 " might secure to yourselves an entrance into the
 " everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour
 " Jesus Christ." This I will assure you has been

my endeavor for you : and therefore you now
 “ are put in remembrance of them.”*

In the general turn of the Discourses you have had here, it may have been observed, that very seldom any thing has been advanced upon speculative points in divinity; or the controversies which have divided the Church of Christ under the name of Heresy. This, I will confess, has always studiously been avoided before you. Our office is to teach Christianity; pure Christianity, such as we find it in the Holy Scriptures, and not in the interpretations of fallible men. And your time as well as ours is far better employed, in searching after clear and certain and practical truths, and laying them up in memory; than in any abstruse doctrines whatsoever. Indeed, before a mixed congregation, the more carefully erroneous doctrines are kept out of sight, the better it is for the generality of hearers.

The errors of other Churches have incidentally been mentioned, so far as they affect practice; but no farther. And you know, you have always been cautioned at the same time, against any asperity or sharpness towards those of any communion differing from our own.

* 2 Peter i. 12.

Against the Enthusiasm of the Methodists you have been cautioned from time to time, lest you be misled thereby in respect of your conduct, or rendered unhappy in your minds. So far as the Methodists are sincere, and zealous to inculcate what they esteem right, we do not blame them: In that respect they deserve commendation. But we ought to blame those of them, and we do blame all those, who are guilty of uncharitableness towards such as differ from them. Their inculcating the necessity of Faith or Belief and Trust in God, and in His having redeemed mankind by Jesus Christ, is certainly true Gospel doctrine. But their supposing that Faith alone is to save men, without a suitable Practice in the conduct of their lives, is as certainly an Error: which will lead, and we see does lead some into the habitual practice of vice; from a supposition that on account of their profession of Faith, they are secure of happiness eternal, however they may behave; and which does lead others of better disposition, into melancholy and despair, and thence too frequently into absolute madness; from their not having presumption enough to pretend to feel what they do not feel; or enthusiasm enough to fancy they feel an assurance of their salvation, which frail man cannot have.

Against the leading Errors of the Church of Rome you have been cautioned; seldom by name, because I could wish you not to be uncharitable towards them; though once I gave you a series of discourses professedly on that subject, at a time when it appeared necessary to lay their Errors open before you. Indeed against them, it is proper from time to time to caution mankind: because that is a corruption of Christianity expressly pointed out by Prophecy, as what was to arise in the Church of Christ, and what is to continue for a certain specific term and no longer: a corrupt Church, from whose Communion God's "people" are exhorted to "come out"* before its destruction; for that it should come to an end and be destroyed with a signal destruction before the coming of Christ to judgement. Against your being misled by them, it has therefore appeared to be our Duty to caution you.

But there is another Error against which our discourses have more frequently been pointed; because that appeared most urgent in these days; I mean the fashionable Error of Unbelief. Against that you know many and many a Discourse has been levelled: more perhaps than some persons may have thought necessary in this place. But,

* Rev. xviii. 4.

seeing the mischievous strides Infidelity had been making in other countries, and the progress it seems to have had in this, made me the more in earnest to counteract its baneful influence wherever my weak endeavors could reach. Though distressing it was to think, that the human mind should so far debase itself, and depart from all sense of right, as in these enlightened days to question the existence of a Deity, whose wonderful works are better known than ever they were in former times; little was it to be expected that we should live to see the day, when Atheism is publicly professed in an assembly of one of the most enlightened nations, and received there with applause. Though our endeavors have been to obviate the mischievous spreading of the works of a voluminous French writer;* who manifestly not from principle or conviction, but merely for the sake of applause, had been sapping the foundation of Revelation; little could it be imagined that the day would come, when the ashes of that man should be brought in triumph from a distant country, to be deposited in his native soil, whence he had been banished for unbelief; and that a statue should be erected to his memory in a temple, and venerated there with next to divine honours. Though I have been zealous to guard you against the contagion, which by destroying

* Voltaire.

all the principles of religion, all hope of another life, must tend to confound the distinction between right and wrong, and undermine the foundation of Government and good order among men; little was it to be expected we should see the day, when one of the most polished, and seemingly most obsequious and best regulated of nations, should become a pattern of Anarchy; a horrid example to mankind of cruelty and more than savage barbarity; a Mark certainly of the displeasure of the Almighty upon them, for their having cast off all acknowledgement of Him.

It has been said repeatedly of late, that such great things are objects of prophecy; and people have been disposed to search the scriptures, in order to discover what is to be the issue of this unheard of scene. That they are objects of prophecy, your Pastor will freely declare he has little doubt. Such things are not permitted without good reason: and as they are always known before to the Almighty, so they are often declared before. But the reason may not be to be discerned by us. The consequence to which any Prophecy points, is never to be discovered till after the event.

The Captivity of the Jews in Babylon was declared by the Prophets before it happened; and

that it should last just seventy years: and Cyrus, by whom they were to be restored, was mentioned by name by the prophet Isaiah* near two hundred years before his birth. Yet was the whole so involved in prophetic language, that Cyrus's entry into Babylon, was as unexpected as the most unlikely thing that could occur.

The Birth of Christ was repeatedly the subject of the prophetic writings; and various particulars were specified long before, which should attend it: all which are clear to us now, but were not so to those who lived before the time of their accomplishment.

The Destruction of Jerusalem was foretold by our Saviour himself: and certain signs were given to the faithful Christians, when to quit the city: but the infatuated Jews understood them not, or would not pay attention to them; and many perished for their unbelief: and at this day we behold their descendants, the remnant of them, wandering as vagabonds upon the earth now above one thousand seven hundred years: and we know from the mouth of our Lord himself, that they will wander in their dispersion, till towards the time of his second coming.

* Isaiah xlv. 28. † Matt. xxv.

The falling off from pure Christianity to Popery was declared in the earliest days by St. Paul,* and St. Peter, and more expressly by St. John in the book of Revelation. And another falling off to Mahometanism was intimated by him too.† And it should seem as if each was to have its end after one thousand two hundred and sixty years (a term specified by the Prophet Daniel‡ many ages before John.) Popery we see has arisen just as it was foretold it would; and has infected the Western world with its errors. Mahomet has arisen, and misled the East with his false doctrines. And can we doubt that, when the time appointed arrives, both shall cease? The Jews we see dispersed over every country; a by-word and a proverb every where: Our Saviour declared they should. And can we doubt but that they will be recalled, and restored, and embrace Christianity, when the designs of the Almighty are fulfilled? when the times are ripe for it? “Scoffers,” St. Peter tells us, in the Chapter whence my text is taken, “there will be in the ‘last days,’ who shall ridicule the belief of Christ’s coming. Yet will he most certainly not

* 2 Theff. ii. 2. 1. Tim. iv. 1 † Rev. ix. 1. ix. 13.

‡ Dan. vii. 25. xii. 7.

come the less assuredly for their scoffing. He will come, when it is seen fitting he should come. And Popery, whose seat St. John points out to be at Rome; "that great City which" at that time "reigned over the kings of the earth*," the "city seated on seven hills†," a name by which Rome was often described by her own poets; Popery will fall with a signal destruction: and God's people are called upon, to "come out of her,"‡ "that they be not partakers of her sins, and that they receive not of her plagues." And Mahomet that false Prophet,§ will probably fall about the same time, and be suffered no longer to deceive the world with his imposture. And the children of Israel, now dispersed over the face of the earth, will acknowledge Christ, and be restored to the holy city. - And Christ himself will reign on the earth in righteousness. Then will there be as it were a "new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness||;" and a new Jerusalem for God's elect**; for such as have rendered themselves worthy, during their continuance here, to be elect of God, and be made partakers of the first resurrection in Christ's kingdom. After which, at the final consummation,

* Rev. xvii. 18.

† Rev. xvii. 9.

‡ Rev. xviii. 4.

§ Rev. xvi. 13.

|| 2 Peter iii. 13.

** Rev. xxi. 10.

all shall be raised; and all shall be judged by Christ himself; and all shall be sentenced to happiness or to misery, according to what they have done in the body, whether it be good or evil; when Christ, having accomplished all things, shall “give up the Kingdom to God the Father,” that “God may be all in all.”*

Of the certainty of these things there can be no doubt. We read of them again and again in the holy Scriptures. “Heaven and earth may pass away;” but the word of God will not fail.

Yet, *When* these things are to come to pass, it is not for us to know. Though specified punctually as to the time; and what by and by will be known to have been so; it is not given to us to understand it yet. That remains in the bosom of the Father. While Popery continues, Christ will not come: but the destruction of Popery may be sudden, and may be followed immediately by his coming: and we who are warned to “come out of that church,” ought not to remain in her, nor to go over to her, nor to join in any of her errors, lest we be partakers of her plagues. While there are followers of Mahomet’s delusion, it should seem Christ will not come: but their

* Rev. xvi. 17. + Rev. xvi. 18. * 1 Cor. xv. 24. Rev. xvi. 19.

destruction may and most probably will be sudden: and we, who have been made acquainted with the rise of that false prophet, ought to beware of being seduced by his disciples, or thinking too lightly of their errors. We are told that the coming of Christ will be sudden; when least expected: and we are bidden to watch. We are commanded in all ages to live in expectation of it; to study the prophecies, and to watch the signs: but we are not to pretend to turn prophets ourselves; nor to point their meaning to this or that or another nation, this or that or another year or even century of years. When it shall please the Almighty Ruler to unfold the signs to us; then shall he that is of a willing mind to receive the doctrine, be shewn its meaning, and will profit from it himself, and will be a blessed helper in explaining the true interpretation of it to others: while, on the contrary, those who are reprobate and alienated in their hearts from God, will be alienated in their understandings too; and will suffer justly for their unbelief; because they have wilfully despised the admonitions which God has given to the world.

Thus far seems clear. But, to what the present scene of things may tend, it is impossible to guess. It may be one of the preludes to the great catastrophe; a fore-runner not far distant.

But on the other hand, it may be one far off indeed. What is immediately to be ascribed to it, and it should seem with little room for doubt, is, that the horrid scene displayed before all our eyes in a neighbouring nation, is intended as a **WARNING TO MANKIND**: a Mark to shew to what a state of misery they reduce themselves when they cast off all acknowledgement and dependance upon God. “When men choose not to retain God in their knowledge,” says St. Paul,* “he gives them over to a reprobate mind.” This we see now exemplified before our eyes. And the Lesson we ought to learn from it, is, to *beware of their errors.*

But there is another Topic calls for a few more words from us on this day, by way of caution or admonition to you. These people seem to answer in many particulars, to a description the Apostle gives in the chapter before my text, of some, who, he says, “despise government; presumptuous, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities:”† “but as natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed, they speak evil of the things they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption, and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness.”‡

* Romans i. 28. † 2 Peter ii. 10. ‡ Verse 12.

Whether this has any relation to them we cannot say. But this we may affirm; these Atheistic philosophers, pretending to understand the nature of Government beyond whatever has been known in the world, has certainly led to the present scene of mischief. Yet surely, far different in every branch of science is the Theory of what an ingenious mind can frame, from what Experience will justify. The naturalist, the philosopher, the chemist, the farmer, may form to themselves Theories very plausible and ingenious in their several departments, and what it might appear from speculation alone must be true: yet no sooner have they recourse to Practice, but experiment baffles all their visionary schemes; and some unknown, or unseen, or unthought—of property, confounds the whole. The same it is in the art of Government. So complex a System is not the production of a moment; of one man, or of one set of men; but a work of *Time*. The manners of a people must be consulted and taken into the account, before it can be said with any propriety what Form of Government is best for them: and their minds and their habits must be formed to receive it, and to profit by it, before it can be beneficial to them. Government there must be in every Society, to form a Society; and in every nation, to form it into a nation; else

men are but a herd of brute beasts. Yet that Government which may suit one, will not suit another, till the minds of the people become properly habituated to it.

Indeed, it does not in general become us, the Ministers of Christ, to discourse upon these matters in this place: but on this occasion, it would misbecome us to be silent. In these times it behoves us to remind you, that submission to Government is an ordinance of God. It is not for us to say, but that a nation may change its Form of government if it be seen proper: yet it is for us to say, that the people, if they consult their own happiness, will not be hasty to desire a change; that temperate and gradual amendments are all that can be desirable; that on any great change, the interval of Anarchy is always far worse for the people, than the very worst of governments; and that the common people, who generally mean well, always find themselves at last the dupes of aspiring leaders of faction.

These are truths, of which the page of History affords many an example. But at this day, when we ourselves behold the shocking effects of Anarchy in our next adjoining nation: a nation flourishing in arts and opulence, sunk at once to wretchedness; deluged in blood, through their having listened to the plausible tale of the Philosopher,

the speculative Theorist on Government; can we of this nation, who already sit happy under our own Vine and our own fig-tree as the prophet expresses it*; we, who do feel our Persons secure from the oppression of arbitrary power; our Property our own; not liable not possible to be wrested from us by violence, but the arm of Government is always ready to defend it for the lowest individual among us against the highest? shall we, who know our house to be our castle, as it has often been called; whose entrance we may shut if we please against every intruder; shall we expose it to the demands of the licentious, who are endeavoring to raise themselves on our ruin? shall we, who know that no assessments can be imposed upon the lowest orders among us, but what must be laid in due proportion upon those who appoint the assessment, and must be paid by them in like proportion too; and that therefore, if there were not other reasons, it is best for the lowest, that property should be the measure of the ruling powers? shall we, who already have a Government, long since the envy of other nations; formed gradually from the experience of centuries; and adapted to the turn of the people, and the turn of the people and

* Micah iv. 4:

their minds and their habits long adapted to it; a Government, under which this nation has thriven so exceedingly, and become in wealth and importance one of the first of nations;— Shall we barter all these solid advantages, all this fair inheritance, for a vision? an ideal scheme of perfection? We who are free-born, shall we cast away our birth-rights; deluded by the plausible tale of Atheistic Philosophers, who have these four years been trying to form a Government they call perfect, and have in each succeeding year made it worse than the preceding? Shall we listen to these Infidels, who have brought their own country to desolation, and have been striving with all their arts to reduce all others to the same degraded level? shall we join hands with them? or shall we concur with a few licentious men among ourselves? men of unbounded ambition and desperate fortunes, who are practising every artifice to checque the ardor of this nation, and the endeavors of its Governors, towards stemming the torrent of Anarchy and licentiousness gone forth on the continent?—Far be such a madness from an English mind. As far be this from your thoughts, as the savage barbarity exercised among them of late, is from the honest feelings of a true English breast. Cool and undaunted

courage to resist oppression, is the character of this nation; but wanton cruelty is not.

Of the peculiar happiness under which we live at present; having a King on our throne, who is an exemplary pattern of religious and moral conduct in himself; a Father to his people; whose study it is so to govern them, as to make them happy; I have said nothing: and scarcely know what to say in these days. It is a blessing, for which we ought most certainly to be thankful to the Almighty. A reason it is, we all must sensibly feel, as at all times so particularly in these distracted days, for grateful acknowledgement; and for rallying round the standard of a sovereign, so justly beloved, I might almost say adored by his people; and for defending him to the last drop of our blood against his secret as well as his open enemies. But—our neighbours! They too had a King! the most humane that ever swayed their sceptre. Born to tyranny if he so had willed, he studied to alleviate the oppressions to which his subjects had long been enured, and to curtail his own power for their advantage. He summoned his people around him, to notify to him their wishes. They went beyond his: yet he acquiesced; and accepted and swore to maintain a form of Constitution they themselves had framed. And now they have deliberately murdered him, for

what? for having been true to the oath which they had themselves imposed upon him! Be this a warning to us, to what lengths men can go when they cast off all sense of shame. Pretending to rights of their own, these Reformers forget the rights of others. May we beware of such reforms.

Yet, not content with the destruction of their own Country, the French Reformers have erected the standard of Rebellion, and invited the disaffected of all nations to flock to it. Nay, we have seen them fallying forth in lawless bands, to different countries; professedly to overthrow all good order, and destroy all good faith among mankind: driving the Magistrate from the seat of Justice, the Priests from the altars of God; declaring war, and waging open war, against all laws, divine as well as human.

Till this consummation of iniquity was *professed*, we of this happy nation kept aloof; not seeking to profit from the troubles of others; not wishing to add to their distress. But when they burst their own bounds, and began like a torrent to overspread other nations; when with insidious arts they were detected in stirring up sedition among ourselves; then it became necessary to rouse the spirit of this nation, to defend her religion and her laws; and to arm herself against these invaders of

her peace. If ever war can be justified, surely the present is the case. We have armed, to defend ourselves against the aggressor. We have sallied forth, solely to rescue the oppressed from the oppressor. And, whatever the desperate Leader of a now unprincipled opposition may assert; or whatever obstacles the small remnant of his followers may assist him in throwing in the way of Government; we will say, we must be bold to say on this occasion, that their conduct had shewn, and does still shew, how necessary it was for Government to arm. Their own behaviour proves, how necessary it is to keep a watchful eye over them, and over their traitorous correspondence with a faithless enemy.

In this confidence it is, the Justice of our cause, we are here assembled this day, to implore the Divine assistance to our arms. And with humble confidence we surely may expect it. We have opened an asylum to the Ministers of their Altars whom conscience has driven hither; and our purses have been opened to feed them; though they are of a persuasion contrary to our own, and though perhaps they may not always have deserved it at our hands. But, while we guard against their errors, Christianity, Protestant Christianity, teaches us to do this. We have received those of the Laity from among them who were heretofore our enemies, so far as we dared;—because they are

in distress: and we think we are obeying the commands of Christ our Saviour therein; and we trust that it will have its reward. We go not forth to battle to invade the rights of others; but we are constrained to defend our own. Our deluded neighbours have cast off all regard to the Deity: and thereupon we trust, that "the Lord our God," in whom we believe, "will save us from their hands; that all the Kingdoms of the earth may know," and may acknowledge henceforth, "that He is the Lord, even He only."

But, to conclude at last (for I have been much longer than I could have wished) leaving the Atheists, and the Licentious, and the Insincere, to repent of their conduct, or to receive the due reward of their deeds; let me, as a Minister of God to you, "beseech you Brethren, by your hope in God; by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,"* which I know you all expect; "and by our gathering together unto him," which is to be in its due time; "that ye be not shaken in mind," as though there could be any doubt of Christ's having come to redeem the world; or of his being to come again to judge mankind; "neither be ye troubled" at the thought "that the day of Christ may peradventure be at

* 2 Theff. ii. 1.

“hand;” but “withdrawing yourselves from
 “every brother that walketh disorderly,” may
 you so remember what you have been taught,
 and so profit by it, as that the day of the Lord
 may not overtake you “like a thief in the
 “night*,” or surprize you unguarded, whenever it
 shall be. May you our dear children in the Lord
 hold yourselves always ready. “Seeing you know
 “these things, may you beware, lest being led
 “away with the error of the wicked, you should
 “fall from your own stedfastness.” Be true to
 yourselves: Be faithful to your King, to your
 Country, to your God; the God of the whole
 earth, the God of all peace and consolation; and
 may you “grow in grace, and in the know-
 “ledge and love of God, and of our Lord and
 “Saviour Jesus Christ.”†

* 2 Peter iii. 10. † Verse 18.

"handy" but "withdrawing" yourselves from
 "every brother that walketh dishonestly," may
 you remember what you have been taught,
 and to prophesy in as that the day of the Lord
 may not overtake you "like a thief in the
 night"; for I suppose you are guarded, whenever it
 shall be. May your outward conduct in the Lord
 hold yourselves always ready: "seeing you know
 these things, may you beware, lest being led
 away with the error of the wicked, you should
 fall from your own steadfastness." Be true to
 yourselves be faithful to your King, to your
 Country, to your God, the God of the whole
 earth, the God of all peace and consolation; and
 may you "grow in grace, and in the know-
 ledge and love of God, and of our Lord and
 Saviour Jesus Christ." Amen.

S E R M O N II.

HEBREWS X. 23.

“LET US HOLD FAST THE PROFESSION OF OUR
 “FAITH WITHOUT WAVERING, (FOR HE IS
 “FAITHFUL THAT PROMISED) AND LET US
 “CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER, TO PROVOKE
 “UNTO LOVE AND TO GOOD WORKS.”

THE Letter which we have been commanded to read before you this day, in behalf of a collection for the present maintenance of some of the French Clergy, who through a principle of conscience have been driven from their homes, is a call upon me speak to you on that matter. Though sensible of their distress, and pitying their situation, I have been shy of bringing their case forward to your notice, till it was judged proper to do it in this public manner throughout the

kingdom. Indiscreet zeal is often seen to be the cause of much mischief. And therefore, whatever it be that any person may choose to do in a private way, for which he is accountable only to God and his own conscience; when he acts in a public capacity, he ought to consider how far the public may be affected by any thing he undertakes, and to conduct himself accordingly.

Of the troubles in which a neighbouring nation has for some years unhappily been involved, I need say nothing at present: having entered largely upon that subject, and full as much as could be proper for this place, on a late occasion.

On the peculiar situation of their Clergy I then scarcely touched; since it seemed foreign to the purpose of that day. At that time they were only just so far mentioned, as affording one ground of confidence we might entertain in the protection of the Almighty, in that we had opened an asylum for them in their distress, though they are of a communion differing much from our own. But on that head, it seems now proper to discourse a little more at large. Their laboring under difficulties, is a call upon the true Christian to relieve them, whoever or whatever they be, so far as in prudence he may. Yet the true Christian, who sees or thinks he discerns errors in their Doctrine, will at the same time beware, how he suffers himself

to be misled by them. He will be cautious, lest the approbation he gives to their conscientious conduct in respect of what they esteem right, should make him inclined to adopt some of their errors, or to think of them with indifference. At least, it should seem but a necessary part of the Duty of a sincere Pastor, at a time when he endeavors to move his Flock to the exercise of charitable benevolence towards these clergy of the Romish Communion, to add a seasonable caution against the being led astray by them. It is one thing to shew Christian kindness towards those who differ from us; and quite another thing, to depart from the Truth; or even to waver from that steadfastness, with which every man ought to maintain what he sees to be true. *in bñA won*

In my late Discourse, I endeavored to recall to your memories the principal heads of what, during several years ministration among you, had been inculcated: exhorting you to "beware, "lest being led away with the error of the wicked, "you should fall from your own steadfastness"* in the belief and practice of true Christianity. The error against which that caution was more particularly levelled, was, the mischievous error of Atheism; which even the Romanists themselves will join with me in calling, the error of "the "wicked." Against that, you know, I have re-

* 2 Peter iii. 17.

peatedly been zealous, and while breath lasts shall always esteem it my Duty, to caution you. And one principal drift of the discourse on that day, was, to point out to your observation the horrid effects of Atheism riding triumphant in an assembly of a neighbouring nation. Effects, which mark certainly, if any thing can with confidence be declared a mark of, the displeasure of the Almighty towards them for their having rejected all acknowledgement of Him. "They did not choose to retain God in their knowledge, and he has given them over," as the Apostle says, "to a reprobate mind."* They are already feeling some of the consequences of it: and will thence by and by learn wisdom. We may do it now. And my endeavor on that day was, to point it out, and render it visible to you.

But of a different kind is the caution I have now to give you. Though fully convinced, as I trust we of this place all are, of the errors of Popery, and the truth of our Protestant profession; and though I must say that it would be wickedness in us, thinking as we do, to go over to them; far be it from me to say, or to think, or to suffer you from any words of mine to think, that they, either their Clergy or Laity, ought to be stiled

* Romans i. 28.

wicked in any degree, because they continue in it. We may wonder at the delusion under which they lie; and may pity them for not discerning their error: more especially, if we consider Popery, as in truth we must, to be a corruption of Christianity; pointed out by Prophecy as a corrupt Church, from which the people of God are warned to "come out,"* before its destruction. But, while its members continue under the delusion, and do not see it in the light we do, there certainly is nothing of wickedness to be laid to their charge for their continuing in it. While they think it right, they most assuredly would be as much to blame for quitting it; as we, thinking as we do, should be if we were to go over to it.

Among other things of which I reminded you on the late occasion, was, a series of Discourses delivered before you some years since, when an alarm had gone forth in this nation as if Popery were gaining ground among us. After the ferment subsided, which indeed had gone far too great lengths while it lasted, it appeared to me to be the Duty of a Rector towards his Parishioners, to explain to them fairly the state of that matter. You know in general, during the whole of my

* Rev. xviii. 4.

ministration among you, I have cautiously abstained from the mention of any errors of any people whatsoever, when that could be avoided. The inculcating of Gospel truths, as deduced immediately from the Holy Scriptures, and guarding you against the deceitfulness of sin, I have always supposed must be more generally beneficial to you. But at that time it appeared necessary, so far to depart from my customary method of preaching, as professedly to enter upon that subject; and to let you know, what once was Popery, what is Popery in these days, and what we mean by Protestantism.

To that end, I gave you an historical account of the origin and rise of the Papal power. How, from being merely Bishops of Rome, a principal City, they had gained an ascendancy over other Bishops, and become temporal Princes: That from an ambition, not peculiar to these Bishops of Rome but natural to man, they had taken advantage of the ages of ignorance which followed the decline of the Roman Empire, to advance their power; and gradually had established many Practices in the church, of which neither the Scriptures themselves, nor the example of early ages give us any intimation, nor for which any authority can be traced. To recount even the principal of them now, and argue at all upon them, would

detain you too long ; though at that time I endeavored to explain them to you. Suffice it, for the present, to say, that Books being scarce, and few persons able to read, what little learning there was in those days, centered almost wholly among the Clergy ; and that they, living in a profligate age, were not such patterns of righteousness, as Christian Bishops and Christian Preachers should endeavor to be : That the Holy Scriptures having been translated early into the Latin tongue, the language then spoken at Rome, the Service of the church was in that language too : and, as the Papal power extended itself over other countries, the service of all the Western Church become conducted in that language in every nation, though totally unintelligible to the people. This, among other things, as it took its rise from the authority of the See of Rome, so it helped to increase that authority ; and enabled the Popes and their counsellors, to establish what doctrines or what ordinances they saw convenient.

The leading clue to this authority, and the predominant feature of it, was, the Infallibility of the Pope ; or at least of a council under his direction : That he was the sole interpreter of Scripture ; and that his decisions were never to be questioned. By them, the Worship of the Virgin Mary, and of Angels, and of Saints depart-

ed, was introduced into the Church of Christ. By them the practice of erecting Images and Crucifixes was authorized ; whence Image-worship or Idolatry became prevalent. Through them and their authority, the Eucharist or Lord's Supper, from a reasonable service in Commemoration or Remembrance of Christ's death, became looked upon in a very different light ; the Bread or Wafer being by them supposed converted absolutely into the real body of Christ, and the wine as absolutely into his blood (which they call transubstantiation) and thereupon become objects of adoration. After which, as in the Jewish and heathen temples, the beast sacrificed by their Priests, was sacrificed for the People ; so Christ was considered in the Popish Mass, as sacrificed anew for the living and the dead. Whence came repeated Masses to be celebrated by their priests, though alone, for the people absent ; and for the dead themselves, whose souls were supposed to be relieved thereby from the pains of Purgatory. And much profit arose to the Romish Clergy, from the donations of the rich, for masses to be celebrated over their graves : Purgatory being supposed by the Romish Church, to be an intermediate state of punishment between death and the resurrection, from which the souls of the faithful might be relieved by the prayers and

masses of the living clergy. From the idea of the mass being a Sacrifice, has arisen the custom, so scrupulously observed in these days, of attending mass celebrated by a Priest, as a sacrifice offered for the People present; without their ever participating of it themselves, or ever hearing or understanding one of the words pronounced. Hence arose also the custom, when the faithful Catholics do partake of it, that they partake only of the bread and not of the wine; the bread alone being pretended sufficient for the Laity, while the wine is reserved for the clergy. From the assumed power of their infallible Popes, arose also the practice of granting Indulgences for sins, to those who could afford to pay for them; the shameful traffic in which in those days, transferred from one of the religious orders in the Romish Church to another, first gave rise to the Reformation. This transfer was seemingly a trivial circumstance in itself; but, through the good pleasure of God, this it was which brought about a great revolution in the Church of Christ:

An obscure yet learned Friar, of that order which thought itself injured, was led thereby to an inquiry into the authority by which it had been appointed. A young Pope then in the chair; who had set on foot that traffic on a larger scale, to refill his coffers emptied by the encou-

rage ment he had given to the polite arts; insens ed at such inquiry by one so far his inferior in rank, instead of soothing a dangerous opponent, as his predecessors had done in similar cases, issued the thunder of excommunication against Luther; who being emancipated thereby from the authority of the Church, prosecuted his inquiries with redoubled ardor. From one article, he proceeded to another; and finding the then practice of the Church, very different indeed from what Christ had taught, or the Scriptures authorized; translated the Holy Scriptures into his native tongue, and invited all persons to compare the one with the other. The art of Printing then recently invented (pointed out possibly at that time to mankind by the Deity for that purpose) forwarded his hopes. The Laity, from being unlettered, were then become learned, and capable of examining for themselves. Copies of the Holy Scriptures were now easily multiplied and dispersed, both in the original and the translation. The Clergy could no longer keep mankind ignorant of what Christ really had taught: and from that time, the whole fabric of Popery began to totter.

The Reformation spread on every side; more particularly through Germany where it first sprang up. Many Princes of the Empire adopted it.

The Pope issued his censures against them. They appealed from the Pope, to a Council. A Council he refused to call. Provincial Synods met to consider of the affair. At one of them, (at Spire, 1529) where some Decrees were made with which the Reformed could not comply, they protested against the decrees, and delivered their Protestation in Form; and from thence obtained the name of *Protestants*. A name, by which the reformed have been called ever since: and in which they glory. To specify those decrees would detain us too long now. But, as I told you in one of those discourses, so it may be proper to repeat that now, The great distinction between the Church of Rome and those who protested, was at that time, and continues to this day, and ought for ever to be kept in remembrance by those who call themselves Protestants; that the Papist or Roman Catholic, derives the rule of his Faith and Practice from the Decrees of his Church; the Protestant, from the word of God alone. They keep the Scriptures in a learned language, and as much as in them lies, restrain the Laity from the use of them; and they celebrate divine service in an unknown tongue: we put the Holy Scriptures into the hands of the people in their own tongue, and celebrate divine service in their own tongue too. They esteem their Church and

its Rulers, infallible: We consider all men, and all Churches composed of Men, as fallible; and apply to the Holy Scriptures, and study the will of God in those Holy Scriptures which "were written for our learning," and submit our understandings solely to what is clearly declared therein.

This distinction I could wish you always to bear in remembrance, as the reason for our departure from Popery, the ground of the hope that is in us.

To say that Popery in these days is the same as it was in the days before the Reformation, would not be doing justice to those who now are of that profession. Though their Doctrines have continued the same, and some of those we esteem objectionable doctrines, have been authorized anew by a Council held at Trent a few years after the Reformation; yet certainly many corrupt practices in the Church of Rome, were reformed then: and many, very many pious and learned men there have been, and still are, members of that communion, and officiating ministers and dignitaries in it. True indeed it is, alas too true, that the corruptions retained in the Church, have given an advantage to the Infidel, to argue from them against Christianity itself. For, seeing so much of what we must allow to be absurdity in

certain doctrines, and superstition in certain practices in that communion, they have been too ready to accuse Christianity itself of absurdity and superstition: to look upon it, or to represent it, as a cunningly devised fable, for the benefit of the religious orders. And, from a pretended horror of the persecuting spirit, sometimes too much encouraged by the Church of Rome, they have pleaded the cause of heathenism as more tolerant. This has been the favorite topic of many a celebrated writer* of late years. And these have given birth to that spirit of Deism, and thence of Atheism, which has gone forth and spread its baneful influence on the continent, the sad effects of which we now deplore.

Yet is Christianity itself, surely, not to be charged with the corrupt doctrines or practices of any Sect of Christians whatsoever. Such as we find it in the Holy Scriptures, it is pure and peaceable, rational and consistent. It is not involved in mysterious doctrines, nor burthened with ceremonious observances. It authorizes no persecution; but recommends universal charity or benevolence towards all. Of ceremonies, (if they may be called ceremonies) it appoints but two: the form of admission into the profession of it, by Baptism;

* Voltaire, Gibbon, &c.

and the Form of reminding us of that profession, and declaring our continuance in it, by partaking conscientiously of the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper: partaking of them both, ourselves, in remembrance of Christ; who suffered once and but once for all mankind, and rose again for all, and is ascended into heaven, whence he will come again to judge all men. If the Church of Rome pretends to sacrifice him afresh in their mass; the Church of Christ does not. If the Church of Rome authorizes the worship of the Virgin Mary, or of Angels, or of the Spirits of men departed; the Church of Christ does not: nay one of his Apostles calls that a "departing from the faith*." If the Church of Rome allows of images, and worships them with incense and adoration; the Church of Christ does not: the Apostle of Christ warns Christ's disciples to "flee from idolatry." If the Church of Rome approves of and countenances monastic vows, or enjoins celibacy on certain orders in her communion; the Church of Christ does not: the Apostle of Christ considers the "forbidding to marry" as a "giving heed to seducing spirits." If the head of the Church of Rome claims to be lord of the faith of Christians, the Apostles themselves disclaim any such authority. Early practice

* 1. Tim. iv. 1

seems to countenance the setting apart of an order of men, for teaching Christianity, and for exhorting men to the profession and practice of it; but authority over the faithful they had none: much less had they, or did they claim, any authority to persecute those who differed from them.

Yet in this last respect, those who separated from the Church of Rome, have alas! shewn themselves too much disposed to follow them. Eager in the defense of what they esteemed right, Protestants of every denomination, have specified their tenets more particularly, and thereby rendered the terms of communion with them more narrow, than perhaps was necessary; and each has certainly been more than enough eager to maintain their respective opinions by persecuting others. An Error, natural perhaps to man: certainly not peculiar to one sect or another sect of Christians: practised under Popery, and retained by Protestants, without considering sufficiently, that it is really a departure from the plea on which they can justify their separation from the Church of Rome.

In this nation, from various causes which need not be recounted now, the fear of a return to Popery was predominant: to which, the support a Popish Pretender to the crown of these kingdoms received from the court of Rome, added a farther cause, for laying very severe restraints upon every

member of that communion. The troubles of the last century, gave occasion for rigorous laws against the Protestant Dissenters too. In respect of each, it must be allowed, that some of the feverities towards either of them, were scarcely to be justified. However; be that as it may: the most severe of our laws have of late years been moderated, and lately been taken off from each: and some others may be in contemplation, if an over eager blending of religion with politics on their parts, does not make it be thought necessary to retain, what would gladly be forgotten; and, if it might with safety, would gladly be obliterated.

It is but of late, very late years indeed, that the nature of Christian Toleration has been rightly understood: and some may have to learn it yet. But, seeing it is impossible to bring men to be entirely of one mind on any subject whatsoever, it is surely in vain to look for it, or to attempt it, in respect of religion. Nay, since religion, if a man be sincere, must be next to his heart; and every man must believe according to the conviction of his own, not another's, understanding; and must be zealous to worship God accordingly; the Ruling Powers of a state, can have no right to abridge any man of the liberty of so doing; nor to lay any restraints upon him on that account;

excepting when, under the pretense of religion, the principles he avows interfere with the concerns of the state. This seems to be pretty generally acknowledged among us now. And though some there may still be on one side, who are for keeping up harsh laws; and some on the other, for laying unlimited claim to a civil allowance, which perhaps may be doubtful as to its consequences; yet every man of every persuasion is certainly now at free liberty to worship God in his own way; and, if he does not interfere in the concerns of others, no one does interfere with his.

On this presumption it is, that these French Clergy, whose cause we plead before you this day, have trusted themselves among us. Though we, as Protestants, are far from wishing to receive any emissaries from the Church of Rome; (and indeed against such emissaries as should attempt to pervert our faith, it is apprehended our laws continue still in full force); yet we, as members of the Church of Christ, protesting against the corruptions of the Church of Rome; and taking the Holy Scriptures for our guide the rule of our conduct; are ready to exercise Christian benevolence to all men, even to an enemy, in distress: For so has Christ commanded. Banished from their homes; driven from their own country for conscience sake, by a set of Atheists who have

seized upon the Government of it; these Romish Clergy have shewn the confidence they have in a nation of true Christians, by their coming hither, instead of resorting to others of their own Communion. They know the happy constitution, and the lenity of our Government. They know the Laws of Christ (though their Church has not always conducted itself according to those laws): And they know too, that we not only profess to observe them, but have oftentimes manifested the sincerity of our professions by our practice. In that confidence it is, they have resorted hither; to this happy Island, as an Asylum against the fury of a lawless and impious band. And they have found their confidence well placed. They not only have been received among us as brethren; but they have been supported hitherto, by the voluntary contributions of private individuals, to whom their distress, and the peculiar circumstances attending it, were known. The Letter read before you this day, which has been communicated to us through the regular channels, is graciously intended by our sovereign to make their case known throughout the Kingdom; in the hope, and the trust, that this nation at large will afford them assistance till the storm be overpast; and prove, to these yet deluded members of a Church which we must call corrupt, that ours is, thus

far at least, the true Church of Christ. Perhaps by such benevolence, we may gain more than one brother. Perhaps, by seeing the purity of our "Faith working thus by Love*," some of that communion may be led into an examination of theirs; and may return as our forefathers did to the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ, and may practice it in Christian purity: and, should that happily be the case, those sad distractions which have driven them hither, may tend to good indeed! Should that Church, the Church of Rome, which certainly has been reformed in some respects since ours separated from it, think better of us, and condescend to learn a lesson from us, and gradually trace back its errors, and, rejecting human authority and human inventions, return to the simplicity of the Church of Christ;—should the relief they receive from us under their present distress, work that change in their hearts; these ministers of that communion having been driven hither, may prove one of the greatest of blessings to them,—and through them to the world in general. It may be one of the means in the hands of the Almighty, (who always brings forth good out of the evil men had devised,) one of the plans designed by him, for awakening

* Gal. v. 6.

mankind; and purifying his Church from the corruptions with which it has so long been overspread. Of this, at least, my Brethren we may be confident; that such truly Christian behaviour in us, will secure a blessing from Him, on us, and our Church and Nation.

May you then, dearly beloved, do your parts on this occasion. As says St. Paul to the Corinthians, upon a collection he was making for distressed Christians in his days, so may I say to you; "as you abound in love and harmony towards each other, see that ye abound in this grace also*." Consider within yourselves, what it may suit you to spare towards the relief of our much injured brethren. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that which a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." For it is not intended "that other men be eased, and you burthened."† "Make up before hand your bounty‡," whatever that be; that when those who are appointed, wait upon you in the course of this week to collect your benevolence, "you may be ready." May you, our dear children in the Lord, ever "hold fast the profession of your Faith without wavering; and may your practice always be found suita-

* 2 Corin. viii. 7.

† Verse 13.

‡ 2 Corin. ix. 5.

“ble to it. (For He is faithful who hath promised” to recompense to every one according to his deserving). But may you, and may we all, “consider one another also, to provoke unto love, “and to good works.” Then may we have confidence before God: and may assuredly trust in Him, that He will go forth with our fleets and our armies, and support them in a righteous cause; He will look down with favour upon us, and “defend” this happy nation “with the shield” § of his protection.

§ Pl. v. 12.

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7 JUL 66

